

Go? But I'm a Soccer Player!

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Hikaru was a MVP regional soccer player when he met Sai. He took up go on the net to appease the hopeful ghost. Three years later, Sai left and Hikaru got an offer to the B-leagues. Now, a year a half later, Hikaru encounters the go world again by chance.

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Chapter 1

Go? But I'm a Soccer Player!

Summary: Hikaru was a MVP regional soccer player when he met Sai. He took up go on the net to appease the hopeful ghost. Three years later, Sai left and Hikaru got an offer to the B-leagues. Now, a year a half later, Hikaru one again encounters the go world by chance.

Disclaimer: I don't own Hikaru no Go and never will no matter how much I want to own it.

Hikaru was almost twelve when he first encountered the childish go obsessed ghost in his grandfather's attic. He had received full scholarship offers to all the top schools in the region because of his soccer abilities and his grandfather decided to reward him by allowing him to pick anything from the attic where all the old heirlooms of the Shindo family were kept.

Four years ago...

Walking around the attic, Hikaru tried to make a decision. Almost anything in the attic would worth hundreds of thousands of yen if pawned, but he can't do that unless he had a death wish. His parents would kill him for sure if they hear about it. However, no matter the value, Hikaru just did not find any of the weird scrolls or paintings interesting and do not understand why such boring things can have such high values.

Walking around, Hikaru saw a wooden table with round legs; it looked like a small sized tea table. The table certainly stood out against all the painting and calligraphy in the room. Upon closer inspection, Hikaru found that there was a blood spill on the table.

"Hmm," Hikaru mumbled to himself, "if this table is in here, then it should worth quite a bit. Wonder why grandpa never tried to get the blood stain off?"

Suddenly, Hikaru heard a questioning voice, "you can see the stains?" Spinning around with the agility of a seasoned athlete, Hikaru saw with shock a man with long, dark purple hair and wearing a traditional outfit. "Kami, I thank you..." the figure, ghost? continued, but Hikaru paid it no mind as he found himself sinking into darkness.

Hikaru's life changed after that fateful encounter. The strange man told Hikaru that he was a go instructor from the Heian era who committed suicide after being banished from the court for loosing a game to a cheater. Hikaru found out that the table was in fact not a table but a go board.

After the incident, Hikaru's grandfather never mentioned the attic and got Hikaru a computer for his present instead. When Hikaru asks about the board, his grandfather would just change the topic.

Unable to put up with a ghost who constantly badgers him about go, Hikaru looked up the game on the internet and began playing a game or two for the ghost on the condition that Sai promises to not bother Hikaru during his soccer practises. Hikaru never knew of the chaos he caused in the go world that summer. As the summer vacation passed, Hikaru found that go was not as boring as he first thought and sensing his host's interest, Sai began to teach Hikaru go during Hikaru's limited free time in between all his soccer practices.

September that year Hikaru chose to chose to join Kaio junior high, the top school in the region. He was put into the special class with all the other top athletes in the region. Although he heard about Kaio's top of the class go club, Hikaru never had the time to visit. Neither did Hikaru know who Akira Toya is, therefore had no idea that the son of the current top go player in the world in the same school as him.

Because of Kaio's extremely high expectations of all of its students, Hikaru's hands were quite full to keep his soccer skill at the highest level he can manage. Most of Hikaru's limited free time was dedicated to learning go with the hyper ghost and sometimes playing net go for Sai, so he never had anytime to get any know the real go world.

Hikaru was watching the news one day for a current events assignment when he heard the name Toya Meijin, the person closest to the hand of god in the current era. Sai had demanded right there and then that Hikaru try to arrange a game between him and Toya Meijin. Unable to do anything, Hikaru decided to appease Sai by looking up all the information he can about go when he plays on the net for Sai during Sai's opponent's thinking time. It was during that time that Hikaru found out about the chaos he, or technically Sai, caused in the go world. Sai decided to not trouble the go world anymore and settle to just playing Hikaru at night with a foldable go board Hikaru bought behind his parents' back.

Three years later...

When Hikaru heard about Toya Meijin's heart attack in the school hallways from some chatting go club member, the soccer Regionals were just finished. Using the few days of break before Nationals, Hikaru managed find out which room the Meijin was staying at. Didn't want to be recognized, Hikaru snuck into the hospital room with a cap and arranged a game for Sai.

Toya Meijin lost the game and retired from the go world after loosing his Jyuudan title to Ogata Seiji like he promise Hikaru. However, during that game between Sai and Toya Meijin, Hikaru showed a great depth in his go knowledge by pointing out the spot that would have allowed the Meijin to win. Seeing that move, Sai finally realized his purpose for remaining in the living world, and realised that he fade away soon.

Not wanting to bother Hikaru who was focus all his energy on the Nationals, Sai did not tell Hikaru about his imminent disappearance. On the same day Kaio won Nationals, Sai slowly fade watching Hikaru's jubilant face with a content smile.

Hikaru did not discover Sai's absence until the next day, having partied with his team mate all night. He looked everywhere to find the ancient ghost in vain. A week after Sai's disappearance, Hikaru received an invite to join the B-leagues of the Kanto region based on his performance in the nationals.

With pressure form his grandfather, his parents, and all of his team mates to accept the once in a life chance deal, Hikaru accepted the invitation.

Wanting to distract himself from thinking about Sai's disappearance, Hikaru threw all of his energy and spare time into soccer and quickly became a rising star in the Japanese soccer scene. Nine months later, an A-league coach saw Hikaru's immense potential and drafted him into A-league.

With Hikaru's hard work and a little luck he made it on the Japanese National team as a substitute because of an unfortunate accident that happened to two players just days before the world cup.

However, because of the lack of those two players, Japan was behind by 3-0 in their top sixteen match at the end of the first half. Half way into the second half, Japan was down to 5-0. Seeing that is not chance for recovery for team Japan, as stamina is team Japan's biggest weakness and if the team stand no chance when they are full of energy, they won't be able to do anything without energy. The coach sent on all the substitutes giving them a chance to gain a valuable experience that they wouldn't be able to gain otherwise.

It was during that time Hikaru manage to force a goal because of a great assist and the opposing team's underestimation of a substitute team. Hikaru and his team mate because an instant national focus even though Japan was thoroughly slaughtered in that game. During

that game, Hikaru also gained the title of "Light" (1) courtesy of the kanji of his name.

After that game, Hikaru's grandfather gave Hikaru a pleasant surprise. As a congratulatory present, Hikaru's grandfather gave Hikaru Sai's board. Heihachi Shindo said to Hikaru as he handed over the board, "I don't why were keep on asking about the board three years ago, but out of the thing in that attic, this is the most valuable, belonging at one time to the greatest go player of all time Honinbo Shusaku. I think it must have been some sort of fate that you fainted right next to this goban. I have kept this goban as my most prized possession, and now I give it to you. Maybe," Hikaru's grandfather continued in a much lighter tone, "you'll become the Honinbo Shusaku of soccer."

It was then Hikaru finally remember the other sport he neglected in favour of soccer. That night Hikaru fell asleep next to the board and dreamt of Sai again. In his dream Sai was smiling at him and holding out his paper fan for Hikaru.

The next day, Hikaru bought a paper fan for himself.

A few weeks later, a magazine poll indicated dissatisfaction among parents because children are now focusing too much on sports such as soccer instead of school work or something more brain stimulating. Some parents even indicated that they were not happy with Hikaru because of the "ridiculous" dream of become a young sport star that he seem to have injected in a lot of the minds of the children who chose him as idol after the world cup.

Hikaru's coach talked with Hikaru on how to soothe the parents' displeasure. They decided to have Hikaru reenroll into the high school counter part of Kaio junior high that Hikaru dropped out of for the world cups. Kaio was of course to have a student of such high profile even that school would not be Hikaru's main focus. Looking deeper into Kaio high, Hikaru's coach discovered Akira Toya, who made it into the Honinbo tournament finals. Although he lost, he still

walked away with a 7-dan rank and a nick name of the "brightness" (2) the go world, also curtsey to his name.

Hikaru's coach suggested a joint interview of Hikaru and Akira, the two "bright ones" to show Hikaru's acknowledgment of traditional games as a joke. However Hikaru's coach was shocked to find out that Hikaru actually used to play go. Although Hikaru claimed to be "no good at it", the his coach still saw this as a way to lessen the discontent against Hikaru and the rift that is gradually forming between the traditional and the reforming parts of the school.

The go association took almost no time to convince as they saw this as a great way to spread the popularity of go. The soccer association had also though that a joint interview is a good idea to lessen the tension and the blond banded rising soccer star.

So on this fateful day, Hikaru stepped into the go association for the first time in his life for a interview, with no idea that the skill he displays will cause a major commotion in the world of go.

To be continued

(1) The Kanji for Hikaru's name is 進藤光 the Kanji "光" literally means "light"

(2) The Kanji for Akira's name is 塔矢亮 the Kanji "亮" literally means "bright"

Ok, that was the prologue. I got this idea when I read a fanfic that tell what would happen if Hikaru had never met Sai. It's been stuck in my head for sometime and it's really bothering me so I thought I'd throw this out and see what you people think. If enough people respond I might turn my attention to this fic instead the other ones that I am stuck on without ideas on.

The main reason I didn't want to put up this story was because I thought that I might be making Hikaru way too perfect. But the more I

think of it, the more I think it might not matter that much. Also I read "Light of a Beautiful Stranger" where Hikaru is good at soccer, so I thought maybe it wouldn't be too bad. Do tell me if you think that I'm making Hikaru into too much of a perfect person.

Well, tell me what you think anyways!

Chapter 2

Go? But I'm a Soccer Player!

Summary: Hikaru was a MVP regional soccer player when he met Sai. He took up go on the net to appease the hopeful ghost. Three years later, Sai left and Hikaru got an offer to the B-leagues. Now, a year a half later, Hikaru one again encounters the go world by chance.

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Waya Yoshitaka was not a patient person, and at this moment, he was not really happy. He had never liked one Akira Toya. In fact, ever since Waya met the famed son of Toya Meijin, he had marked the other boy as an arrogant person. Later, the young go prodigy had been in Waya's way for just about everything go related. Waya was knocked out of many go tournaments including his first pro exam and the Hokuto Cup Qualifiers. Although none of those incidents were directly caused by Akira, Waya still felt that the go tensai was somehow at fault.

Now, sitting in the Go Association interview room waiting for one Hikaru Shindo's appearance to a joint interview with Akira Toya, Waya was very grumpy. Although the Soccer Association had only requested the presence of Akira Toya, the Go Association had arranged for quite a number of young pros to show up. Waya heard that the Go Association was trying to use this rare chance to try to attract more young people into the world of go.

Once again Waya cursed the Toya prodigy. "How come we have to show up at Toya's interview?" he thought moodily, "As if he isn't showing off enough, gaining that 7-dan rank and making the Honinbo finals weren't enough for his ego. He was just lucky to be in

the same school as this Hikaru Shindo. And that stupid Hikaru Shindo, he's probably just using us to stop all the negatives he's getting. What would a soccer player know about go?"

As if sensing his friend's bad mood, Isumi Shinichiro, a young pro who passed the pro exams the same time as Waya put a hand on Waya's shoulder, silently asking his friend to calm down.

Along with Waya and Isumi, there were two other pros sitting in the interview room as tag a longs. They were Ochi Kosuke and Yashiro Kiyoharu, the second and the third board of Team Japan for the Hokuto Cup. There was also a batch of insei in the room to show the younger generation's interest in the ancient game.

Just five minutes before the interview, Akira Toya and the reporters for Weekly Go and some other various sport and go magazines walked into the room. From the looks of it; they came from a pre-interview session. Everyone in the room knew that although the interview is said to be joint, the focus was going to be completely on Hikaru Shindo. It is true that both he and Akira are hailed as prodigies in their respective fields, in Japan; soccer was a much more popular sport than go. Thus, Hikaru Shindo was a much more important figure than Akira Toya.

The difference in importance showed when Hikaru showed up two minutes late for interview. "Sorry!" The soccer star exclaimed upon entering the room, "I got cornered by a group of fans in the subway!" he said sheepishly scratching his head. If he had been anyone else short of a title holder in the Go Association, he would have been seriously reprimanded. However, the organizer had just brushed it off and told Hikaru that it wasn't a problem.

Sitting down next to Akira, Hikaru has smiled and extended a hand and said in a friendly tone, "Hi, I'm Hikaru Shindo, don't know if you know me, but we go to the same school."

Taking Hikaru's hand Akira gave a smile with no sign of annoyance, took the hand and replied, "Of course, one would be hard pressed to

find a teen who does not know your name after your performance in the world cups. The same couldn't be said for myself though, I'm Akira Toya."

The photographers took this chance to take pictures and the interview was on the way.

Having heard from Hikaru's coach that Hikaru had used to play go, the Go Association had prepared some very easy Life of Death problems for Hikaru to solve to start the interview.

Of course for Hikaru none of those problems were of any challenge as they could not have been any harder than the beginner level. He had cheekily pointed out the correct spot with his new paper fan.

Hikaru's move with the fan had caused more interest to the reporters than the fact that he had solved all the problems easily, so it came to no surprise when a reporter asked, "Shindo-san, could you please explain that you are using the fan to point out the spots instead of placing the stones?" That was something the other pros wanted to know too. After all, to them solving small cased problems that Hikaru did was no where as interesting as the method he chose to do it. Some others had even thought that the questions had been pre arranged.

To many people's surprise, Hikaru sighed and replied, "Well, you could say that the fan reminds of my mentor in go. Every time he trounce me in a game or that I'm stuck on a dead end, he would smile and point to a spot on the board that could have turned the game to my favour." Seeing the curious looks on the reporter and the pro's faces, Hikaru quickly added, "He's gone now, my mentor." Hikaru had carefully planned out what to say and what not to say about Sai last night. He knew that a part of the Go World is still after Sai's identity, especially after Meijin's defeat in Sai's hands. Hikaru knew that Sai is still a hot topic and he could not afford to talk about Sai.

After his explanation, many reporters looked up in surprise and one had blurted out, "So you actually really played go before?" Seeing his colleague's warning looks the reporter quickly covered his mistake by asking Hikaru, "What had made you interested in go than?"

Akira sighed. He knew this was going to happen. He personally had been sceptical at first when the Go Association told him that Hikaru Shindo used to play go. He had heard about that boy in Junior High and could not imagine anyone less likely to play go. When he first saw Shindo solve the Life or Death problems with such ease, he too had thought that it was a Go Association set up to either save face for Shindo or to give others the idea that Shindo plays go to attract more people. However, Akira knew that if it's a Go Association setup, Hikaru would have at least gotten one or two questions wrong. The Association is not that stupid to make such an obvious setup.

Akira was snapped out of his thoughts when he heard Hikaru's sigh before he started, "Well I suppose it started when I received full scholarship offers to all the top Junior Highs in the region because of my MVP award in soccer. My grandfather wanted to give me a congratulatory present of my choosing from his little shack (1). I saw this goban with legs there and thought it was a tea table." Ignoring some of the insei and pros' gasps, Hikaru continued, "I was really curious 'cause the shack was full of weird paintings and calligraphy so the table really stood out. I got closer and according to my grandfather, I fainted next to it for some reason. Had to go to the hospital in an ambulance after that."

At this point in Hikaru's explanations, everyone gasped.

"Wait," a go pro, from the looks of the tag he wore, with red hair called out, "If you fainted next to the goban, shouldn't you hate or become scared of go instead of getting into it?" The red headed pro was smacked over the head by a black haired pro next to him (AN: Waya and Isumi for those of you who didn't figure it out). Hikaru saw that the other players all glare at red haired boy.

Akira being the perfectly brought up boy he was, was quick apologize for the other pro's rude behaviour.

Hikaru brushed it off, "Thank god," Hikaru thought, "he just bout me more time to think out the rest of my answer. I gotta pay more attention so I don't let slip bout Sai."

"Well," pretending nothing's wrong, Hikaru continued, "when I got better, I asked grandpa about the goban and he refused to tell me anything and kept on changing the topic whenever he thinks that I'm about to ask about it. I was twelve. It was the rebellious stage, so the more grandpa didn't want to talk about the goban; the more I wanted to know. So I looked it up. It took a while 'cause I didn't know what it was, but I found this picture on this site that told me that the table was a goban that's used to play go."

"I looked up go and was well, miffed. I mean the site said that it's a game for old geezers who are forty or above." Pausing, Hikaru saw the offended faces of the people form the Go Association. Scratching his head and laughing nervously Hikaru covered, "Well, seeing all the other people my age or even younger here, that's obvious not the case..."

Relieved that the people form Go Association don't seem to be mad at him anymore, Hikaru continued with his story, "Well, it was summer vacation and I didn't have any required soccer practice since teams are gonna to be different in middle school, I looked into go anyways. I had nothing better to do."

As an after thought Hikaru winced and stuck out his tongue uneasily at the go players and mumbled, "Sorry!" the reporters laughed.

"Phew," Hikaru thought, "Stupid, I did avoid Sai but now I got the whole Go Association mad at me. Well, it wasn't that much of a lie. I wasn't all that interested in go in the beginning. Oh well."

Sighing, Hikaru continued, "At first I have to say I thought go was annoyingly complicated. I mean there were just so many places I

could put the stone, especially in the beginning. It was really confusing!"

At this point many of the go pros and insei laughed good naturedly. After all, they had the same experience when they first started playing go. Even Akira smiled. Politely, the go prodigy admitted, "Most people feel that way when they first learn the game. Myself included."

Smiling Hikaru agreed, "Yeah, I was really confused during that summer. But I really didn't like loosing, so I continued with go even after school started. Then this one day I just realized, why my... friend thought go was so fun." Realizing his slip, Hikaru quickly added, "How do I say it. You know the star points on the goban. Well the goban is like the universe, and the star points are like the stars. Every stone you put on the goban is like adding the number of the stars. Gradually, you create the universe." With an unconscious loving tone Hikaru continued unaware of the awed go players, "it was like that on the goban I can play god and create a whole new universe." Hikaru then stopped and laughed, "Well, I suppose you people think that I have a god complex now, eh?"

"God complex?" Waya thought, "He has no idea. Maybe I was wrong, Hikaru Shindo might have really liked go in one point of time. To see go that way, he sounds like a obsessed go player."

Unknowingly to Waya, his arch rival Akira Toya agreed, "This person," Akira thought, "he had seen what I had. Father had told me something similar when he explained to me the Kami no Itte, better known as the Hand of God." Nodding to Shindo, Akira politely replied, "No, I'm sure there are other go players out there who finds go intriguing the same way."

"Really?" Hikaru asked, "Anyways, so yeah, I started to actually play go for fun instead of just for the sake of my pride. Around a year and a half ago," at this point Hikaru hung his head and mumbled, "my mentor... left and I got an offer to the B-leagues. I don't know whether it was because that the B-league was much more

competitive or I just didn't want to remember... him, I focused all my energy on soccer and pretty much left go alone. Until few weeks earlier, after I just came back from the world cups, I pretty much forgot about go. Then, my grandpa gave me the goban, the one I fainted next to. I kinda picked go up after that."

Sensing Hikaru's lack of wanting to talk about the topic, a Weekly Go reporter changed it. After all, he didn't want the young star to get depressed and end the interview then and there. He asked, "So, do you have any favourite players?"

This question seem to have worked well in getting Shindo out of the depression as he quickly jerked up and laughed nervously glancing around. "Err..." Hikaru replied, "Err, can I...." he groaned, "but this is too embarrassing... I have three players that I really like, but one of them well..." Hikaru stopped and quickly glanced in the direction of Akira.

His glance was not missed by anyone as the attention was focused on him, the Go Weekly reporter asked, "Oh? Is Akira one of your favourites? It's nothing to be embarrassed about!"

His words were met by Akira's surprised look and Hikaru's burst of "NO! No, no, no! One of them is Toya Meijin OK?" Shooting an apologetic look at Akira, Hikaru then proceeded to drag his hood over his head and laughed awkwardly."

"Oh," it was Akira who replied, "That's nothing to be embarrassed about. Although it might be immodest coming from me, but I think even many of the insei here or even a few of the pros have at one point had father as their favourite player. I am also included on that list."

"Oh, OK." Hikaru replied, "My other favourite is Honinbo Shusaku. I used to be completely obsessed with him! He was a complete genius!" This was actually half true as Hikaru had tried to find everything he could about Honinbo Shusaku after Sai's disappearance, attempting to find a clue on Sai's whereabouts. After

seeing Shusaku's kifu, Hikaru did realize its genius, but Hikaru can't exactly say that Sai played those games.

"Ah!" Another reporter exclaimed, "That's a rare one! Very few people these days still study Shusaku! Especially amateurs. So who is your other favourite?"

Hikaru immediately cursed himself. When he had said he had three favourites he had meant Toya Meijin, Shusaku and Sai. He liked the Meijin for his incredible skills and Shusaku for his acceptance of Sai. After all, Shusaku was probably the only person who will ever understand Hikaru's story. He had changed his reason for liking Shusaku to his skill, but how was he going to explain Sai? Sure he can go on about the skill again, but Hikaru had not wanted to turn any attention onto Sai in the interview.

"Err... you see... ," Hikaru stuttered, "My other favourite, well, people aren't even sure who he... or she really is. You know, the Saint of Netgo, Sai." The title was real enough. Hikaru still remembered that day when he stumbled upon the title in the Netgo forum with Sai. The ghost was completely jubilant and out of control for the entire week, thrilled about the title.

However, at this announcement, Hikaru heard quite a few gasps. It seems that the topic of Sai was still of a great interest in the go world.

"You like Sai?" the same red head pro that questioned Hikaru earlier asked, surprised.

Smiling at the boy that had unintentionally bought him some time earlier, Hikaru proudly replied, "Uh huh, I got about all of Sai's later Netgo kifu. I think Sai started to play around July four and a half years ago. I started to record his game from about early November that year. I think I got a little over a hundred or so." That was also true, he had started to record Sai's Netgo games after he had challenged to defeat Sai a coupled months after Sai started to teach him go."

"Really?" the red haired player gasped, "That's probably the biggest collection of Sai's kifu! Isumi," he pointed to the black haired friend sitting next to him, "His friend Yang Hai was the biggest collector of Sai's kifu I know of and he's only got around about sixty of them!"

"Yoshitaka 3-dan is correct, Shindo-san," Akira said, "Father has been searching for Sai's kifu since Sai defeated him and he has only found thirty-seven of them with all of his connections."

"Oh," Hikaru replied while silently thinking, "This is bad... how am I suppose to cover this? I can't tell them that I only had so much because I caught all of Sai's games since I played them! Oh, well, I'll think of something later, distract them for now. "Well, I probably started early and had more time since you guys had jobs. If you want, I'll leave you an e-mail my address, you can contact me later and I can let you borrow the kifu."

"Really?" the red head, Yoshitaka 4-dan asked, "Thank you!"

"I'm sure that my father will appreciate it. Father has been looking everywhere for Sai's kifu. I thank you on his behalf." Akira said politely.

The reporters meanwhile were busy scribbling down what had just happened. Hikaru Shindo having more of anything go related than the Meijin is a big story. Any reporters convinced that it was a Go Association setup were pretty much convinced that the interview was real.

Of course since that both Sai and Toya Meijin had been mentioned, the reporter asked about their famous Netgo game.

Akira being as polite as he always was not offended and calmly stated, "They both played a great game, but Sai came out on top."

Without thinking it through, Hikaru blurted out at the same time, "Toya Meijin could have won if he thought outside of the box."

Hikaru's comment was met with many surprised and questioning eyes.

Ignorant, Hikaru moved the goban that was used to demonstrate the life and death problems towards him and cleared the stone. Everyone watched with shocked eyes as Hikaru replayed the entire game *by memory*. Some also noticed his graceful way of placing the stones. Everyone was shocked. Skills like this although being rudimentary and extremely common in the pro world, takes time to achieve. The chance of a professional soccer player learning it in a short time was next to none. Anyone who still doubted Hikaru's ability to play go were convinced that he is telling the truth. As Hikaru finished the game everyone quieted down to hear what he's got to say.

"Here," Hikaru pointed to the bottom left corner of the game, "Toya Meijin had chosen to cut here. However, if he had placed a stone in the corner here, then white will be forced to block here," Hikaru pointed to the places, not hearing the gasps ringing out. "Isn't that more beneficial? In other words, if black had placed a stone in the corner instead of trying to cut here, it could have won by 1.5 moku."

Seeing the shocked looks and even guarded glares of the pros and insei around him Hikaru chewed his lips. Frowning, Hikaru turned back to the game. Nervously scratching his head he chuckled anxiously, "Did I count the territory wrong? It wouldn't have been the first time...."

Turning the fretting boy, Akira glared, "Who are you? No "no good amateur" as you claim yourself to be could of seen something like that. Countless pros have looked at that game, at least in passing, yet none of them was able to see that. Who are you Hikaru Shindo?"

Hikaru froze. "Uh oh," he thought, "How am I going to get out of this one?"

To be continued

I realized that the board was in a shack not the attic... Sorry!

Well, that was the second chapter, I hope you guys were happy with it and I hope it wasn't too much of a stretch to have Hikaru to have at least mediocre lying abilities.

A lot of people said that the prologue was going too fast, I tried to slow down in the chapter, so tell me if this one went too fast or slow. I didn't know how well I did in portraying the characters. I was never very good with characters, constantly messing them up. If any of you have suggestions, please feel free to tell me.

A lot of people were looking forward to the reactions of the Go world. I promise that there will be a lot of those in the next chapter. They were supposed to be in this one, but since I elongated this chapter, I thought I'd postpone it until when the newspapers come out.

For last chapter... wow... thanks for all those reviews.... I never thought this story will become that popular! In response to some of the thing I was told....

Regarding my poor grammar and lack of flow, I apologize. I admit that the first chapter was rushed and I wasn't paying much attention to it. Sorry if anyone was bothered by my poor grammar. As for the beta suggestion, any volunteers?

Also, I was told that I had a block on reviewers who were not logged on. I will apologize for that as I had no idea such a thing existed. For those people without accounts whom are not happy with me, I have already enabled the anonymous review in case you did not know. Once again... sorry!

Regrettably, the next update will not be as fast as spring break is almost over. However, I will try my best to get the next chapter up as soon as possible. Thanks for reading!

Please tell me what you think!

Chapter 3

Go? But I'm a Soccer Player!

Summary: Hikaru was a MVP regional soccer player when he met Sai. He took up go on the net to appease the hopeful ghost. Three years later, Sai left and Hikaru got an offer to the B-leagues. Now, a year a half later, Hikaru one again encounters the go world by chance.

Disclaimer: I don't own Hikaru no Go and never will no matter how much I want to own it.

Since a lot people says that they can't tell when someone is speaking or when one is thinking so:

"Speaking"

"Thinking"

Turning the fretting boy, Akira glared, he thought, 'Who are you Hikaru Shindo? No "no good amateur" as you claim yourself to be could of seen something like that. Countless pros have looked at that game, at least in passing, yet none of them was able to see that. Who are you?' taking a deep breath, he calmly stated, "Well, that's a very interesting point that you brought up. Many pros, my father, Ogata 10-dan and even Kuwabara Hon'inbo-sensei have studied that game, yet none of them was able to see that. It's quite amazing that you had managed to do so. Can you tell us how you get so good?"

Seeing the information-hungry faces of the reporters, Hikaru froze. "Uh oh," he thought, "How am I going to get out of this one?"

"Umm..." Hikaru stuttered not wanting to give any reporter the chance to ask a question, "Well, I suppose it's all a matter of... of the

point of view. Most pros have a... an established preference in their style of go. My... my mentor had mentioned once that... um... sometimes amateurs will see something that most pros don't... since... since their style changes around so much.... That's why sometimes... one can say that... an amateur is a better player than any pro." Hiker trailed off.

He knew that he did not sound convincing. Sai did mention something similar when he was lost in thought one day. However, he never quite explained it to Hikaru saying that Hikaru was not ready to find out yet. But right now, Hikaru couldn't care what Sai had meant, if it can stump people for a bit, it was good enough for him.

Chuckling nervously at the looks of complete disbelief on the faces of the go pros and insei, Hikaru blurted, "Well, look at the time! I gotta go, or I'm going to miss soccer practise!" he then ran for it before anyone could realize what he was trying to do.

As soon as Hikaru was two blocks away from the Go Association he sighed with relief, 'Finally,' he thought, 'thank god that was over. Why did I even agree to the interview anyways? I hope coach doesn't yell at me for ditching the interview like that.'

Little did Hikaru know, but his coach's reaction was going to be the least of his worries.

The next day...

It was seven o'clock in the morning and the Shindo household phone was ringing. As both of his parents had already left for work, Hikaru reluctantly got out of his bed to answer the phone.

As soon as Hikaru picked up the phone and mumbled a tired, "Hello?" His grandfather's excited voice rang through, "Why didn't you tell me that you were interested in go?" Hikaru's grandfather demanded, "How come you never told me that you were so good in go? How..."

Processing his grandfather with confusion, Hikaru managed a "Huh? Wha'cha talking 'bout grandpa?" while yawning.

"You don't know?" Heihachi asked, "Hikaru, quickly turn to the sport channel."

Sensing the urgency in his grandfather's voice, he quickly turned on the TV. He looked in horror at the footage of his interview yesterday as the announcer calmly stated, "When Toya 7-dan asked for the reason behind Shindo-san's surprising skills, Shindo-san gave a rather blurry and unconvincing explanation before hurriedly stating that he had soccer practise and had to leave early. However we have received information from a reliable source that Shindo-san had been given a week off of training due to the recent negatives..."

Turning the TV off, Hikaru raced downstairs to retrieve the daily newspaper that his father subscribed. To his horror, at the first page of the sports section, the head line in bold letters stated "Hikaru Shindo - A Hidden Go Prodigy?" the subtitle stated: "The Unknown Skill of a Soccer Star!"

Running back to the TV, Hikaru flipped through the channels and found to his shock that the interview he did yesterday was all over the sport and entertainment channels. Even the strict news channels had briefly reported the stunt he pulled yesterday.

The phone rang again. Hikaru groaned and hoped that it was not a reporter phoning. To his relief, it was only the secretary of Kaio High. The secretary told him that the school has decided to allow him a couple of days off in light of the recent events so the student body can calm down.

With no school or practise and the impossibility of going out without getting hounded by reporters, Hikaru decided to visit Netgo to get away from things. Logging into the account that he created for himself after Sai quitter playing Netgo, Hikaru moaned. The entire Netgo community was talking about the interview, especially the

point that Hikaru pointed out on the infamous Sai vs. Koyo Toya game.

Not wanting to hear anymore on the game, Hikaru logged on to a Chinese go site as a guest. To his horror, he saw in the Chinese Netgo forum, he recognized the kanji of his name. Although there weren't as many as the Japanese Netgo, but the number wasn't few in amount either.

Falling back into his chair Hikaru could only sigh.

All around Japan, and in the go communities of China and Korea, Hikaru's interview was being passed around. (It was supposed to be a joint interview with Akira. However, Hikaru was the main person from the beginning and with the surprising skills he showed, most people seemed to have forgotten Akira's existence for once.)

Hikaru's A-league soccer team mates huddled around their coach, reading the paper. "Wow!" one of Hikaru's team mates exclaimed, "Dude, I always knew that Shindo's different, but man, knowing go? That's totally unexpected."

Another one of Hikaru's team mates asked in a confused voice, "What's go anyways? Who are... Sai and Koyo Toya? What's so special about the move anyways?"

Most of the players shrugged. None of them could really understand the commotion that the single interview has caused.

However, Hikaru's coach wasn't as ignorant, having searched up the go world before the interview. Had he known the commotion that the interview will cause, he would've probably never suggested it. Sighing he thought optimistically, 'Well, at least the parents aren't going to complain about Shindo corrupting their kids into brainless joke anymore.'

At the Go Association reception desk, every phone is ringing off the hook. Never had they received so much attention from the general public. Since the morning news came out, there was a quadrupling amount of inquiries about lessons, games and general information from all sorts of people.

To them such a thing would only happen in their dreams. It seems that overnight, go had gone from a game that no one outside of elder generation would particularly care about to the new it thing. The Go association even received calls from the managers of some semi-famous celebrities and sports stars who are suddenly interested in the game that they would have labeled lame the day before.

The whole reason that the Go Association agreed to the interview was to spread out the name of go. However, such good results were totally unexpected. While all the workers of the Go Association were focused on taking care all the inquiries from everyone, all the pros were discussing the point Hikaru pointed out in the game.

Two floors above the reception, Ochi, Yashiro, and Isumi were surrounded by player wanting to know more about the interview the day before. Everyone seemed much more interested in what happened at the interview yesterday than the results of the games that were played today.

Ochi was all red. 'First Toya, now this Shindo.' He thought angrily, 'No matter how much I try, no one has ever recognized me this way. Toya I can understand. But this Shindo, how did such a player pop up from no where? How do we know that he didn't just pull the move off by a fluke? Just one move, and now he is suddenly an important person. Just wait, one day I will prove that I'm not one to be ignored.

Yashiro wanted to scream. He was woken up at 4:30 in the morning by his Go Association friends from Kansai asking about the interview. For the moment he stepped in to the Tokyo Go Association for his final day in Tokyo, he was surrounded by people who wanted to know about the interview and right now he just couldn't take it

anymore. Knowing he will be hounded again once he gets back to Kansai, he seriously considered to just shove all the other pros away so that he could go to the hotel and rest before taking the train back to Kansai. He clenched his fist and cursed his sensei for making his promise to be polite to everyone in the Tokyo Go Association. He knows that right now that he should worry more about Hikaru Shindo than the pros surrounding players, but his head hurts at the mere thought of the Blond banged soccer player.

Isumi nervously scratched his head at all the curious younger pros and wondered once again asked himself that why he hadn't stayed at home like Waya. After all, he did not have a game today and there wasn't even going to be a interesting game today. This reminded him too much of last night when he phoned Yang Hai. He came to the Go Association in hopes of avoding Yang Hai's calls, but now he realized that he had dug himslf into a even worse situation. When Isumi told Yang Hai what had happened, the Chinese was shocked that a soccer player managed to see a turning point in the Koyo Toya vs. Sai game, when he, a 8-dan and self-claimed know-it-all of Sai had not. When he had finally snapped out of his shock, he had more or less forced Isumi to repeat the interview word for word. Isumi could only smile as he remembered his friend's reaction. He was abruptly snapped out of his thoughts by another pro who wanted him to explain what happened during the interview. He really regretted to not have stayed home.

The fifth floor of the Go Association is usually reserved for important games. (AN: I made it up, I don't know if it's true.) One must have a very high level in go in order to set foot on this floor as a player. However today, the players on this player are discussing the same thing as the player on the floors below them.

Kuwabara Hon'inbo chuckled as he read the "Weekly Go" while listening to the other high-dans' discussion. 'It seem that Toya's son might not be so unreachable by the young generation after all. Who would have thought that young Toya's rival would come in the form

of a soccer player?' he mused, 'Well, well, well, Hikaru Shindo, I guess that I will have keep a tighter eye on soccer now.'

Glancing darkly at his chuckling opponent for today's Tengen game, Ogata scowled. While he was angry that his opponent seems to be ignoring him in favor of a mere soccer player, Ogata can't help to feel intrigued by the said boy. After all, he had been after Sai ever since that fated internet game and he had studied that said game for no less that twenty times. However, he had not seen the point that a soccer player had somehow managed to see.

For away outside of Japan in the Korean Go Association, a certain Go tensai was replaying the Koyo Toya vs. Sai game. Staring at the game Ko Yongha smirked, 'It seems,' he mused, 'that Akira Toya might not be the hope for the future of Go in Japan after all. This soccer player, if this move is indeed thought out by him, will become another pillar for the Japanese go world and yet another challenge for me. I have a feeling that things are about to get very intersting soon.'

Around the other Korean players stared at him. None of them have seen Ko Yongha this happy since his game against Akira Toya. Having seen the younger Toya's skill even those who did not know of Hikaru's interview had all decided to look up exactly what had the calm go player get so exited over.

In China, the same game is recreated by Yang Hai surrounded by all the team that participated in the Hokuto Cup. After receiving the call from Isumi, the game was all that Yang Hai could think about. He had studied Sai possibly deeper and earlier than anyone, but this move that the soccer player found, was something he had never thought of before. Or rather that he did not think that it was possible for anyone other that Koyo Toya or Sai himself to find a loophole in such a... what seems like a perfect game.

Hikaru Shindo was another mystery. While the others might not see it, but to Yang Hai, Hikaru Shindo figuring out this move is very different from any other go player figure out this move. Yang Hai has been following the soccer World Cup and he had seen Hikaru Shindo's performance in the Japan vs. Germany game. Although it can't be denied that it was a stroke of luck that he was able to even participate in the game, his performance was not below a few of the starting players of team Japan. For someone with such an insight in go and be so good at another completely different sport to Yang Hai seems quite scary.

Back in Japan in a small apartment Waya looked at the Sai vs. Koyo Toya game for the nth time. When he first heard about Hikaru Shindo, he had thought that Shindo was just a normal jock. The interview shocked him to the bone. He was probably one of the very first Sai fan in the world and he had studied all of Sai's games thoroughly and had at least studied the Sai vs. Koyo Toya game at least 100 times. He didn't even think about the spot Hikaru pointed out.

For the first time, Waya felt scared of someone's go skills. He had justified that all the elder pros and title holders are better than him because of their experience, and justified Akira Toya's skills on the fact that he had a famous go player as his father and had started to learn go so early in his life. However, Hikaru Shindo was completely different. From what Waya heard in the interview, Hikaru Shindo did not even know what go was until he was twelve. To Waya, he couldn't imagine the skills of someone who had managed to obtain such a high level at go in just four and a half years *while playing soccer enough to secure a position on the national team and score a goal in the world cups*. Such a thing didn't seem quite possible to him.

Waya also did not like the fact that Hikaru Shindo seems to know more about his idol Sai than he himself does. He was after all the only person that Sai had replied to. Suddenly Waya gasped, 'Sai!!'

he thought, 'The summer four years ago, that's when Sai first appeared, that's when Shindo said that he started to play go. Wait, if he just started to play go then, he couldn't possibly have been that good. That's it!' Waya jumped up from his seat, 'Shindo's mentor; the one he seems to be avoiding. His mentor left when he joined the B-leagues, that's around the time of the Koyo Toya vs. Sai game! Could it be? Could Shindo be Sai's student? That would explain his insight into the game and all the Sai's kifu that he claims to have.'

Slowly, Waya sank back into his seat, shocked by the conclusion he just came to.

At the Toya household, things are not so well either. Akira had locked himself in his room going over the move Hikaru pointed out. Yesterday for the first time in his go-devoted life he felt an excitement he had never felt before with any other player his age. When the Go Association first informed him about the interview with Hikaru Shindo, he had been sceptical and had thought that the whole thing was going to be a waste of time that could be used to study go. Now, he was glad that he did push off the interview.

In that interview Akira had found a new push for his gradually diminishing interest in go caused by the lack of a worthy opponent his age. True, there's Ko Yongha who he had lost half a moku to in the Hokuto Cup, but the Korean player had not managed to fulfil Akira's longing for a rival. While all the other young pros are jealous of Akira for his skills and position in the go world, Akira was jealous of the other young pros for having a goal to work toward. Although many were envious of him for making it into the Hon'inbo finals, Akira wishes that he never participated in it. The better he became in go, the lonelier he lost interest in the game he once loved. For him having his father as a rival was not enough, he needed someone else, someone his age, and yesterday, he found that someone.

Also, unlike to others, to Akira, Hikaru's stuttering explanation for his skills made sense. In fact, Akira thought that it was a great eye opener. Having grown up with go and have established a style

preference in go very early on in his life, Akira had never noticed how some of his moves in different games were so similar. Akira had never thought that these similar moves could be a problem as all players who reach a certain level will have a certain style and preference therefore would have these similarities in their games. However every style has a weakness, and that's why no one has reached the legendary "Hand of God". Hikaru's words gave Akira an inspiration. If a pro can be good yet not have a certain style that they have to stick to therefore no longer being vulnerable to the weakness of that style... 'Could this, could this be the breaking point of the Hand of God?' Akira thought excitedly

Akira also knows that a solid style is the very thing that separates a pro for an amateur. Giving up one's own style to attempt another style can completely ruin a go player's future. However, Akira was different for all the other players, he was still young yet he was higher in ranks than many others who are far elder and more experienced than him. He unlike all the others had time. He was in a position to take a chance without having to risk his career. To Akira Toya, the interview with Hikaru Shindo could not have happened at a better time.

On the other side of the Toya Household, Koyo Toya smirked.

Akira had told his father about the interview and the move Hikaru made as soon as he got home from the interview. Koyo Toya had stayed up all night to ponder on the game. Musing over explanation that Shindo gave to explain his skills, Toya couldn't help but to wonder just who was Shindo's mentor to have come up with such an idea. He himself had thought of it before. (Unknown to him that his son just came to the same conclusion,) he had once thought that the idea could be the door to the Hand of God. However, he was at that time at a peak in his career, having just won the Meijin title for the first time, he was unable to convince himself to take the risk. His recent retire was also, for a small part, to pursue that idea.

Although he told no one, he also saw the point that Hikaru pointed out, but not until days later. In his last obligated game against Ogata for the Jyuudan title, he had attempted to try something different. He ended up losing the game, but the sense of fulfillment he had gotten from that game exceeded even what he felt when he won his fifth title. From then on, all the travelling and playing against players of other countries, it was all for finding that sense of fulfillment.

He was lost in thought until he was interrupted by the phone ringing off the hook. Akiko told him that the calls were from reporters from Go magazines and otherwise wanted to hear his opinion on the move that could have changed the tides for him in that fateful game. The calls given Koyo Toya an idea. Although he was no longer a title holder, he was still a very influential person in the go world. With a single call he had managed to get Hikaru Shindo's address and phone number. If he remembers Akira's account for the interview correctly Shindo had promised to allow him to borrow his collection of Sai's kifu. It was all the reason he needed to pay a certain soccer player a visit.

Some of you might have noticed that I changed the part that Akira said in the end of last chapter into thoughts. Well, due to a lot of people's suggestion that Akira would never say such a thing in public, I decided that I would change it. Now I think about it, Akira really doesn't seem like the type of person who will say such a thing.

Also, someone mentioned to me that at the beginning I said that Waya is a 3-dan and then changed him into a 4-dan. To clarify matters, currently Waya is a 3-dan, I just wasn't careful enough with my typing. So if I confused anyone there, I'm sorry.

I want to thank anyone who is still sticking with me and I really apologise for the extremely late update, but right now my number one priority is school and it isn't about to change anytime soon. Depending on whether or not that I can find a summer job, updates could become much more frequent during the vacation.

To be truthful, I'm actually quite disappointed in this chapter. I feel that I'm making Hikaru too much of a perfect person in all the other go player's perspective. I do promise that the real Hikaru in the story will not be as perfect as all the characters seem to think he is.

I mentioned in the first chapter that this was a spur of the moment thing, so I haven't planned anything pass the first chapter. This chapter was also very heavy on characters, with is my weakest point. Since I saw so many people waiting I decided that I'll post this chapter as it is. Depending on the reception I could end up replacing this chapter. So if you are really unhappy about it, feel free to voice your opinion and give me suggestions. I haven't had time to think much about this story, so it could still go a lot of different ways. So anyone with any suggestion, please feel free to tell me. I'll thank you in advance.

As for all my beta volunteers, I'm sorry that I haven't had the time to reply to anyone, but if anyone is still interested, please PM me with an edited version of any part of the story. Also please label you PM with the word "beta" in it so I won't delete it y accident.

Once again, I apologize for the really late update. Thank you to everyone who has stuck with me to now.

So, tell me what you think!

Chapter 4

Go? But I'm a Soccer Player!

Summary: Hikaru was a MVP regional soccer player when he met Sai. He took up go on the net to appease the hopeful ghost. Three years later, Sai left and Hikaru got an offer to the B-leagues. Now, a year a half later, Hikaru one again encounters the go world by chance.

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"Speech"

'Thoughts'

Standing in front of Shindo Hikaru's house, Toya Koyo was quite surprised. He hadn't expected a soccer star like Shindo to live in such an old fashioned house. He rang the doorbell and waited. Sure Koyo wasn't sure what he expected when he decided to visit Shindo, but he most certainly did not expect an old man to answer the door. After all, Hikaru Shindo didn't seem like the type who lives with his grand parents.

Before the former Meijin could introduce himself to the old man, the said old man looked at him with wide surprised eyes and exclaimed in glee, "Toya-sensei! What are you doing here?" It would seem that the old man is a go fan. The elder Toya couldn't help but to wonder if the Go Association had given him the wrong address.

He bowed to the excited old man and said, "I'm actually looking for Hikaru Shindo, but it seems that I have gotten the wrong address."

"Ahh!" the old man exclaimed with hastily bowing back with a look of understanding, "I'm Hikaru's grandfather, my name Heihachi Shindo.

Please come in Toya-sensei. I'll call Hikaru and ask him to come over immediately." The former five title holder heard the elderly Shindo murmur under his breath, "He didn't tell me that he left my contact info at the Go Association too!"

Turns out, since an incident a couple of months ago just before the world cups when his address was accidentally leaked, Hikaru had started to leave his grandfather's address and phone number instead of his own. That way, he can avoid the possibility of leaked information while remain in contact through his grandfather if there is an emergency situation. After all, Heihachi is a good secret keeper and few reporters are interested in an old man who barely knows the rules to soccer and only has minimal interesting his grandson's career.

So, when the Go Association asked for his contact info, he had left his grandfather's with out thinking. If Hikaru had known that the former Meijin would pay him a visit, he would never have done so. Because, no matter how good his grandfather is at keeping secrets, the elderly man probably start to babble everything he knows in font of his idol.

Heihachi quickly sat down sat down the former Meijin, brought out his best tea and hurried to the phone. However, before he could make the call, he was interrupted by his guest, "If it's possible, Shindo-san, please do not mention my presence." Giving his idol a confused look, Heihachi did as he was told.

He quickly thought of an excuse while dialling Hikaru's number. "Hello?" his grandson's tired voice rand through.

"Hello Hikaru," Heihachi replied, "I just got a call from your school informing me of your week off. I was wondering if you'd like to come to my place. You, young man, are going to play a game of go with me in return for keeping me in the dark about your go skills for so long." Before Hikaru could reply, Heihachi cut him off, "All the reporters are gone, so I'm not taking no as an answer. See you in a

bit. You better not let and old man down." He then hung up, not giving Hikaru a chance to speak.

It seemed that Heihachi was a much better secret keeper than many gave him credit for. Although the former Meijin didn't talk much, Heihachi managed to stop himself from babbleing all about Hikaru to the silent former five title holder. So the two of them sat in awkward silence waiting for Hikaru's arrival.

An hour later

The door bell of the Shindo household rang rapidly breaking the awkward silence of the said household. Koyo Toya snapped out of his thought and looked towards the door. Heihachi quickly went to get it.

"Hikaru," the former Meijin heard the old man say, "How many time do I have to tell you that ringing the door bell once or twice is enough for me to hear! Why do you insist on..."

Before the old man could finish his would be rant, the former Meijin heard some shuffling and a loud voice, "Just let me in gramps, do you want to risk a reporter seeing me or something?" The complaint was followed by loud footsteps.

Koyo Toya waited with anticipation as he heard the voice of the old man coming closer, "Hikaru, I have a surprise for..." The living room door opened.

Although the former Meijin had looked up pictures of the soccer star before his visit, he was shocked by the person he saw. "Fujiwara-san?" He stared at the boy in loose clothing wearing a baseball cap and big sunglasses covering most of his face. The former Meijin will never forget the boy who "introduced" him to his "rival".

When Hikaru reluctantly took up his grandfather's request, more like demand, to play a game with him, he expected his exited

grandfather, not the person who is commonly referred to as the strongest go player in the world, and certainly not the discovery of his connection with Sai. Looking at the shocked former five title holder, he laughed awkwardly and said, "Hi?" while cursing his bad luck.

Heihachi sensed the tension in the room and wisely chose to leave quietly.

"Shindo-san," the former Meijin asked, "or should I call you Fujiwara-san?"

Flashback

Toya Meijin sat in the hospital bed thinking of strategies that could work against his student Ogata in the fifth and last game of the Jyuudan final when he heard a knock on the door. "Come in" he said, assuming it was a doctor or a nurse. However, it was a young boy around Akira's age who walked in. Looking at the boy with a cap covering most of his face, he asked, "Did you come into the wrong room?"

"Err," the boy stuttered, "I was actually looking for you Toya-sensei."

"Oh?" the Meijin questioned, "Are you an insei or an amateur? I don't think that I have seen you before." He couldn't think of any children other than a go player would ever want to see him.

"Ano... I'm not either... at least I don't think so." The boy replied, "I heard from some people that you are playing go on the internet. I'm not a big go player but I have a friend who plays on the net, he would really like to play a game with you. His nick is Sai, you might have heard of him. He can only play on the net so..."

'Sai?' Toya Meijin thought, 'Wasn't that the person who Ogata said that everyone's talking about during an amateur tournament, the so called "Saint of Netgo"? The one who defeated even some pros? This boy says that Sai is his friend, interesting.' Looking at the boy

he said, "Then why does he hide his identity? What is his real name? He's not a pro isn't he?"

" Well..." the boy stuttered. "His real name..."

" I understand that some strong amateurs would like some chances to play with pros, but I'm not comfortable with him hiding his identity like this."

" I'm sorry," the boy mumbled, unable to hide his disappointment, "It's just that Sai can only play on the internet so I thought.... Forget it. I'm just a complete stranger and you are the so called best go player in the world."

" So called best player?" The Meijin could help but to question the boy's usage of the words, "So called best player. Are you saying that this friend of yours, Sai, is stronger than I am?"

" Well," the boy retorted, "He has never lost before, he forced all of his opponents to resign."

" Alright," the Meijin replied, "The final Jyuudan match is coming up anyways, if your friend is as good as you claim, he would provide a good warm up."

" Warm up?" The boy sounded sceptical, "You should play seriously, I don't want to hear you say that you underestimated your opponent if you loose."

' Is that so?' The five title holder thought. It wasn't rare that a particular cocky player will claim to be better then him, but this boy's words actually sounded genuine. Either this Sai is really a great player, or he's got an overblown ego. Looking at the boy he promised, "If I loose, I'll retire from the go world."

" That's not what I meant!" The boy cried looking worried.

" You actually believe that I'll loose?" Toya Meijin questioned, getting more interested in this Sai character. Cutting off what the boy wanted to say he continued, "The game will be at 10am on Sunday, three hours of thinking time for each person, I'll turn away all visitors. I have agreed to the game and now I'd like some peace, please leave."

The boy was shuffling to the door when Toya Meijin called out, "What's your name boy?"

The boy paused and replied, "You can call me Fujiwara," before walking out the door.

End Flashback

Figuring out Hikaru's other identity, much of his confusing wording during the interview started to make sense to the former Meijin. 'Sai,' he thought, 'that mysterious mentor of Shindo, it's Sai. No wonder Shindo always tries to avoid him during the interview. So, the student of Sai shows his face once again. I have a feeling that the world of go is facing another storm.' as and after thought Koyo realized, 'That would also explain all the Sai's kifu that he said he has.'

"Toya-sensei," Hikaru said snapping the elder Toya out of his thoughts, "Can you keep my connection with Sai as a secret? If one move could cause that big of a deal in the go world, I don't want to imagine what would happen if others discover that I know who Sai is."

The former Meijin knew that Hikaru was right, if one move by him could cause so much chaos in the go world, a connection with Sai could throw him into the center of the storm of change that's currently hitting the go world. However...

"Shindo-san, Sai, he's your mentor right?" Hikaru looked up in alarm. Answering the former Meijin with his action.

"Don't worry," the Koyo comforted him, "I will not say anything about the meeting in the hospital. However, let me play Sai again, just one more time, please, even if the game is online!"

Hikaru trembled and looked at the ground, "I'm sorry Toya-sensei. That not possible" tears leaked out of his eyes, "Sai's gone, he left a month after playing you. I'm sorry." He continued before Koyo could ask why.

The former Meijin looked up in shock. It wasn't that he had never thought of the possibility that Sai might have died. He had thought that Sai might have been gravely sick when Hikaru informed him that Sai can only play on the internet, and when he disappeared after the game, the former pro considered the possibility that he died. Nevertheless, he always swatted that thought away. Sai was his only rival and he just did not bear to even think that he might never be able to play with him again.

"Toya-sensei," Hikaru mumbled in a desperate try to sway the topic of the conversation, "Why did you come to my house in the first place?"

Understanding was Hikaru was trying to do the former Meiji did not mention that he wanted answers on the identity of Shindo's master, instead he said, "Well, I heard from Akira about your collection of Sai's Kifu and your promise to lend them out, so I came to check it out."

"Oh," Hikaru was replied, that made sense, he forgot to leave his e-mail address with that Waya 3-dan and Toya Akira when he ran form the interview. "Toya-sensei," Hikaru bit his lip and continued, "I was wondering if you can play a game with me. I just picked go up after quite a while and I can't exactly just go to go salons to find opponents in my position. Also, you are the person closest to Sai; I want to know where I am. I owe that to Sai."

The former Meijin nodded, "I suppose I owe you for setting up my game with Sai."

Sitting in front of the goban, Hikaru was seriously starting to doubt whether he made the right decision. Although everyone seems to be amazed by the point he pointed out in the Sai vs. Toya Koyo game, he wasn't sure if he counted as a good go player at all. After all, he was thoroughly slaughtered every time he played with Sai and the former Meijin is definitely at Sai's level. He wanted to play again to continue Sai's memory, but if he loose too badly, he might make Sai look bad.

He got black after the nigiri.

Pachi! Upper left star.

The game started.

Pachi! Lower right star.

Pachi! Lower left star.

Pachi! Upper Right star.

All four stars are taken as fuseki began.

Pachi! Pachi!

Pachi!

Pachi!

Hikaru shivered as he played. The pressure felt so much like what he felt during all of his games with Sai. He shook his head and focused on the game. Now is not the time to get scared, he must play the best game he can. Sai's memory is at stake here. Taking a deep breath he focused on the board.

Pachi!

Pachi!

Toya Koyo looked at the board. So far Shindo's play has been solid, around the level of a 3-dan. Consider the fact that he just picked up go again after a break and his soccer career his level is quite startling. However, Toya Koyo was a little disappointed. So far Shindo has not shown the brilliance he displayed when pointing out the point that could have turned the tides for him in his game with Sai.

Pachi! Pachi!

Pachi!

Hikaru bit his lip. He was too nervous in the beginning, making too many shallow readings; he had already lost the advantage of starting first three hands ago. Focusing on the game Hikaru started to get over his nervousness and played at his usual level.

Pachi! Pachi!

Pachi!

The former Meijin smiled. As the game proceeded, Shindo's moves started to get more stable and better thought out. Now he is playing around the level of a 5-dan or a 6-dan. This was what he expected when he agreed to the game. It was quite amazing to see his improvement.

Pachi!

'There!' Hikaru thought.

Pachi!

The elder Toya frowned. Shindo just played 8-12, that was not a good move at all. Was that the real level he's at? The former Meijin couldn't help to be quite disappointed. Just before that move, he had seen a shadow of his rival in his rival's student. 'If Shindo is still at the level of making such juvenile amateur mistakes...' Koyo couldn't help but to wonder if he had overestimated Shindo.

Pachi!

Pachi! Pachi!

Pachi!

'Good,' Hikaru thought, 'He didn't see that. Now...'

Pachi!

Amy other player would have been shocked by the move, but Koyo smiled. 'So that's what he was planning. That terrible move a few hands ago have suddenly turned in to the ideal position. Maybe Akira might not be so unreachable for children his age after all. Shindo, you are definitely worthy of being my rival's student, but that's not good enough to defeat me.'

Pachi! Pachi!

Pachi! Pachi!

Pachi! Pachi!

Hikaru sucked in a cold breath. As the game entered yose he saw that it's impossible for him to turn it around. He bowed his head, "I resign." Reviewing the game quickly in his head, Hikaru's eyes glazed over. "Sai!" He whispered.

Looking at the bowed boy in front of him, Toya Koyo laid a comforting hand on his shoulder. "That was a great game. I'd say you are around the level of a 6, maybe 7-dan. You are not quite at Akira's level, but you are definitely at the level of a higher dan. Your moves are solid and pretty interesting, especially that hand at 8-12, that was definitely a move worthy of a top player."

However, his words were lost on Hikaru. 'Sai,' he thought staring at the game, 'Sai, you are here, in the game, in front of me silently on the goban. I looked for you everywhere and couldn't find you. In the end were at the most obvious place: on top of a goba where we played almost everyday. I finally found a way to see you again: to play. But how can I keep on playing, I have other obligations now. What will I do with soccer? What would you do if you were in my position' Tears leaked out of his eyes he said in a hoarse voice, "Sai, tell me what to do..."

Koyo didn't know what to do with the weeping boy across the goban. Hearing him quiet murmurings that seems has do with Sai Koyo tried to console him. "Hikaru," he said, "It was a great game. Sai would have been proud."

Looking at the former Meijin with teary eyes, Hikaru sobbed, "I found him... he was here all along. Right here. I found him, or at least what's left of him."

To be continued

So, Hikaru finally lost.

That was by far the most difficult chapter to write. Toya Koyo is a pain to write and I have no idea how to play go so hopefully that game made sense. As for Hikaru, I feel that he was a little, ok, very OOC from the middle on. Please feel free to give me suggestions on that.

As of right now, I am freshly out of ideas for this story and am in desperate need for help. So could someone be very nice and offer some ideas?

Thank you for all of those who reviewed! However, I really have no idea how long it'll take me to load the next chapter, hence the lack of a cliff hanger in this one. I just can't bring myself to be so mean. Please! If someone even has the foggiest idea about how this story can go, please tell me. I'm really stuck. I do have an idea, but that can't be put in play for at least another one or two chapter, so I don't know how to continue with the story at this point at all.

So please tell me what do you think and provide some ideas if you can.

Chapter 5

Go? But I'm a Soccer Player!

Summary: Hikaru was a MVP regional soccer player when he met Sai. He took up go on the net to appease the hopeful ghost. Three years later, Sai left and Hikaru got an offer to the B-leagues. Now, a year a half later, Hikaru once again encounters the go world by chance.

Disclaimer: I don't own Hikaru no Go and never will no matter how much I want to own it.

Since a lot people says that they can't tell when someone is speaking or when one is thinking so:

"Speaking"

"Thinking"

'This is it.' Hikaru thought, straightening his uniform. He had dreaded this day since his interview with Akira. Today, he can no longer hide in his house and not come out. He's expected to return to school today. 'On the bight side', he mused, 'soccer practise is back on today too.'

Fiddling with his tie, he caught sight of the piece of note he stuck on his calendar and sighed. His grandfather had walked in during his little breakdown after his game with the former Meijin to investigate in the commotion. After reassuring Hikaru's grandfather that everything was ok, the former Meijin had extended Hikaru an invitation to his study group in an effort to lift his spirits. The elder Shindo made sure that Hikaru accepted the proposal. Glancing at the piece of paper, Hikaru massaged his aching head in frustration. He knows that the elder Toya had meant well, but Hikaru really didn't

want to go. Go might solve all problems to someone as obsessed as the former five title holder or Sai, it doesn't work for everybody. In fact, Hikaru has a feeling that the invitation would only become a burden.

Hikaru pushed the matter to the back of his head, the study session was not until tomorrow, he'll face it when it comes. A bigger challenge lies right ahead: How to get through his first full day of being in public since the interview.

Although two weeks have already passed, the heat has yet to die down like many other headlines about him after the World Cup. Many parents had saw Hikaru's interest in go as a chance to motivate their children to take interest in more brain-stimulating activities. The Go Association only added oil to the fire by providing other media back ground information on the Sai vs. Meijin game in order to keep the attention on go.

Had Hikaru not been so frustrated over the growing media coverage, he would have found it amusing to see all the parents who disliked him just weeks before finding him to be the perfect role model for their child. Role model... Hikaru shivered at that thought.

Putting on his usual over large baseball cap and sunglasses, Hikaru walked outside the house. Even though he is an up and coming soccer hot shot, Hikaru's parents still tried to make him live as much like a normal teenager as possible. Therefore, instead of being driven, Hikaru takes the public transit. Walking to in the subway, he paid close attention to the headlines of various sport magazines, hoping that the buzz over the interview had died down a little. He was disappointed. Fuelled by the fact that he is returning to practise today many of the paper not pertaining to sports picked up this story again. All in all, there was even more coverage then the day before.

Upon arriving at the school, Hikaru noted with horror of all the reporters waiting at the gate. Hikaru cursed himself for not seeing that coming. Luckily, none of the reporters seems to have considered that Hikaru might be on foot and most of them were paying close

attention to all the cars driving by, especially the nice ones. For once, Hikaru was glad that his parents had forced him to take transit.

He managed to sneak into the school relatively easily when all the reporters were busy trying to get a picture of a particularly nice black sport car driving by, only to realize that the car belonged to yet another rich student who happens to attend the school.

He managed to get through the school to his class quite easily too. The halls were almost empty as most students were gathered at the gate along with the reporters trying to get the first glimpse of the new school celebrity. He hoped that he'd have the same luck and sneak into class without notice too. He was out of luck.

As soon as Hikaru entered his classroom, he stopped dead in his track.

Unlike the rest of the school, Hikaru's class was almost all present. After all, why would anyone want to get squeezed to death by all the other people when he can just sit and wait for Hikaru to come to him? Other than that, this was Kaio's famous "celebrity class", as the media referred to it. While the entire school is full of extraordinary smart people, there's a class, ranging from ten to fifteen students, in every grade who are an exception to that.

They are the people who are exceptional in other aspects and famous for it in some circles. Kaio had grouped them in a single class for two different reasons. First of all, it's not very likely that many, if any of them will be able to follow the smartest kids of their age with all the other obligations they have to keep their talents sharp. Having all of them all in a single class will lessen the pressure of school work and save their spirit from being crushed for feeling lost everyday. Secondly, the school feared that if any of them ended up in normal classes, their presence and/or constant need to miss class for different reasons will hinder the progress of the other students.

So, when Hikaru's coach informed Kaio of Hikaru's wish to enrol, he was automatically placed in class 1-F, otherwise known as the "famous people class" or to those who exist to study as the "Failure class". While it is true that all the students in class 1-F were famous, such as the national junior ballet champion, the two B-league soccer players, the Olympic gymnast, the internationally ranked diver, Hikaru's recent bout of fame shadowed most of them. That's why when he stepped into the room, all eyes focused on him.

However, that's not why Hikaru froze in the doorway. No, he stopped because sitting in a corner next to the window staring, no, glaring at him, was Akira Toya.

At that moment, the teacher took notice of Hikaru and smiled. "Hello Shindo-kun, I'm glad that you can finally join us. Since that you had an interview with Toya-kun just a few days ago, why don't you sit next to him." The teacher said, unknowingly putting Hikaru in the situation he fears the most.

A look of terror made itself onto Hikaru's face, he reluctantly moved Akira's desk, cursing his luck, and the teacher who thought that she was doing him a favour. Dumping all of his books onto the desk next to Akira's, he sighed and managed an awkward smile at his new seating partner, only to get a unnerving stare in return. Luckily the teacher broke up the uncomfortable moment by starting the lesson.

While it can't be said that Hikaru likes school, he didn't particularly hate it either. That is, until today. Having dropped out three weeks before his junior high graduation, Hikaru was quite rusty at going back to school life. Having Akira Toya diligently taking notes beside him did not help his concentration either.

Four agonizing hours later ('Five minute breaks between every hour have no use!' Hikaru internally seethed), lunch break finally came. Hikaru was the first to bolt outside of the classroom.

Two minutes later, Hikaru realized that bolting out of class might not have been the best idea. He found himself not only lost, but also

surrounded by fans who were yelling out questions and asking for autographs. With in the midst of people he thought that he also saw a few hateful glares.

"Hikaru-sama I'm a great fan -"

"Shindo-san can will... will you sign this -"

"I love you -"

"Will you marry me -"

"You're my hero -"

Hikaru flayed his arms wildly hope to get a path to open to no avail. He felt a hand grabbing his arm with an iron grip and tried to pry it off until he realized that the hand, of the owner of the hand was helping him out of the crowd by dragging him. After much shoving, Hikaru and his mystery rescuer finally made it out of the crowd in the confusion. He turned to thank his saviour only to choke on his words when he realized that the hand belonged to Akira Toya. Indignant, he was about to demand an explanation before he found his mouth covered by the same hand that was gripping his arm.

"Do you want to be surrounded by fans again?" Akira whispered, although his expression looked like he was growling. "Come with me." He continued.

Seeing no other options, Hikaru followed the go prodigy. He was led through a maze of hallways that he couldn't keep track of and a minute later, was stopped in front of what looked like a storage closet. "What--" before he could finish his question, Akira briskly opened the door and more or less shoved him into the "storage closet".

Hikaru gawked at the sight that greeted him. The room, despite its shabby look from the outside looked like a miniature cafeteria and inside were the entire class 1-F and a couple dozen other students

that he assumed to be the F-class of other grades after recognizing the familiar faces of another three B-league players. "This," Akira stotically informed him, "is where all of the F-classes eat lunch. The school had remodelled this room expecially for all of as so we could avoid the crowds."

"Wow..." Hikaru looked around, "So... all of you were hounded by fans too eh? So nice of the school to be so considerate."

Hikaru's exclamation was greeted by the humourless smile of most of the students gathered there.

"Quite the opposite actually," Houtaru Kimisuke (1), a short, thin girl from his class snorted. Hikaru remembered seeing her on TV a few month back. She was ranked 7th on the balance beam for women's gymnastics in the most recent Olympics. "the school did this to keep our mouths shut. You see, unlike you, most of our sports are not so popular with rest of the student body and our... reception... is not met with such... enthusiasm." At Hikaru's blank look, she rolled her eyes. "To put it bluntly, this is the place we hide from bullies during lunch time. Akira here," she nodded at Hikaru's companion, "thought that you could use a place like this too. Although if you'd rather be with your... fans, you are free to leave. We would appreciate it if you keep the knowledge of this room to yourself."

Hikaru blinked, surprised at her bluntness and obvious unhappiness. "You mean... you guys are bullied?" he asked with shock, "But... but I thought that you guys were all famous. Why would they bully you?"

"That's exactly the reason." Hikaru whipped around to see Akira sitting down at the table beside him. "We are "famous" as you put it," he explained, "but unlike you, we are famous only in a very limited circle. To the general student body, our... achievements are nothing important. However, unlike them, we were granted entrance to Kaio without having to go through the grilling entrance exam like the rest of them. To them that's extremely unfair. Therefore, it caused quite a bit of hatred, which they chose to take out on us."

"Yeah..." A blond boy Hikaru recognized, Alexei Tanami (2), a half Russian player in the B-leagues that has yet to rise to the A- league due to citizenship problems continued, "Kaio doesn't really want this to get out so they renovated an old staff room into a cafeteria just for us. Since we'd probably have the same problem in other schools too we figured that we'd just let it slide."

"Oh..." Hikaru didn't quite know how to respond to that. "Well, ok... guess I can live with that." Unnerved by all the attention on him, Hikaru quickly slid down into the closest seat, which to his dismay happens to be once again next to Akira Toya.

Fifteen minutes later, after finishing his lunch Hikaru looked around in boredom trying to figure out what to do with the forty minutes left of the lunch break. He had planned to brush up his soccer during this time, but after the incident in the hall, he didn't think that it would have been the best idea to leave the room. It was then that Akira rose from his seat and moved to another corner and brought out a, what Hikaru recognized as a set of magnetic portable goban and stones.

Setting it down beside him the go prodigy quietly asked over the den of the cafeteria, "You look bored. Up for a game of speed go?" Meeting Akira's gaze Hikaru shrugged. While he didn't like playing go in front of an audience, being used to net go and quiet games with Sai, he really didn't have anything better to do. He did promise himself that he'll pick up go again and right now he's so bored that just about anything to do sounded appealing. So he quietly shuffled around to face the 7-dan.

"Onegaishimasu," Akira nodded."

Hikaru blinked, confused before hastily coping Akira. "Onegaishimasu," he mumbled.

Akira placed a single stone on the board and Hikaru, remembering what Sai explained to him as nigiri after he memorized a go book Hikaru had bought for him, grabbed a fist full of stones

and laid them out on the board in columns of two. There was none left over. Hastily switching the stones, Hikaru opened the game.

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

Klack. Klack.

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

Klack.

As the game proceeded, the sound of the stones gradually attracted the attention of everyone in the room. Houtaru moved from the wall where she was stretching, Alexei moved from the corner where he was bouncing the soccer ball with the other B-league players, Shinichi, Wanataka, Kazuo and Takuma (3) and most other people moved from their respective tasks to look at the game. However the neither of the two players seemed to notice the increasing attention. Both were too absorbed in their game.

For Hikaru this game took him to five years ago. The sound of the stones, the smoothness of them between his fingers, the thrill of the unknown... all of those took him to those afternoons when he and Sai would play. It reminded him of all those years when he first fell in love with go. "It like I'm god and I'm creating a universe..." Hikaru remembered telling Sai one summer afternoon.

Every hand, he saw the Childish ghost. The traces of the presence of the greatest go master in history can be seen in many of his own hand, abet that they were much more immature. To Hikaru, it was like having Sai back again.

He remembered why he fell in love with the game. After all, go is fun.

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

'What would Sai tell me to do?' Hikaru thought, looking at the board. He had carelessly walked into a trap that thirty moves later will threaten his entire cluster on the left. Breathing deeply, Hikaru imagined the childish ghost cheekily pointing his fan at the place that will turn the tide of the game everytime he resigned. 'There!' Hikaru thought. '6-7! It'll protect the cluster and act as a trap the the same time. That's what Sai would say.'

He could feel tears in his eyes. The familiar feeling of creating a universe on the criss-crossing lines as he once described it to Sai was like going home after a long trip. He sighed and let his instinct run while he loosed himself in the world of black and white that he never realized that he fell in love with.

Klack.

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

Klack.

For Akira it was an entirely different experience. Ever since he could remember, go played an important role in his life. From when his hands were just big enough to hold the stones, his father had trained him to play go. Go was his life. Yet as he grew and gained notice of the world of go, he began to feel the pressure of the expectations that came with being the son of Toya Meijin. All the elder generation looked to him as the hope of the future of Japanese go. His peers offered no comfort. His level of play set him on a high throne that

many young players struggled to one day reach. His position attracted no comfort, only jealousy or pressure.

Sometimes Akira couldn't help but to blame his father for teaching him go at such a young age. But he always pushed those thoughts back, striving to become strong enough to become the rival that his father longed for. He never admitted to himself, but his father was not good enough. He wanted a rival of his age.

Yet all his life, Akira had been alone, untouchable by those his age. Until now.

Klack. Klack.

Klack. Klack. Klack. .

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

Akira narrowed his eyes, the move Hikaru just played went beyond his level just seconds ago. He felt a cold sweat broke. 'Well, let's see how you handle this,' he thought and placed a stone at 12-4, attacking another cluster of Hikaru's, temporarily abandoning the former cluster, 'This should force him to pull back.' While he expected this level of skill, or even higher, from Hikaru ever since the interview, Akira still didn't know what he thought of having the rival he longed for coming in the form of a soccer player of all people, but he didn't dwell on it. Right now he was living the game that he longed for. Losing himself in a world of black and white that he fell in love with years ago.

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

Klack.

Klack. Klack.

Klack.

As if sensing the great emotions that both players were putting into the game, the normally noisy cafeteria was all quiet except for the sound of the stones connection to the board. Although none of them could understand the game, they were absorbed by the intensity of it. As athletes, they all understood the devotion one can have towards their game.

Lunch block was over and none noticed. The game was also approaching the end of yose. Akira sighed as he laid down the last stone, unwilling to break the perfect illusion that hung during the game. Hikaru sighed too. "70-65, adding the moku, I win by 0.5." Akira breathed not registering what had just happened. He couldn't quite remember the last that he had such a close even game. His father told him of the game he played against Shindo, yet Akira couldn't help himself but to be surprised by the soccer star's skill. Although it was just speed go played under an hour, the game to him, held so much more.

He looked to his opponent only to see the tears rushing down his eyes.

Before Akira could ask his opponent what was wrong, Hikaru wiped his eyes and smiled, "He was here all along." That was quite a strange statement to make in the situation.

"..." Akira did not quite know what to say after that. He was saved from his indecision by the single set of clapping hand that led to a thunderous applause. Looking around, both Hikaru and Akira finally noticed the audience they had. The applause seemed to snap Hikaru out of the trance that he seemed to be in. Pointing his head to the

younger Toya, he stuck out his tongue and asked cheekily, "Ok... I made some stupid mistakes... shall we discuss the game?"

Before Akira could give his answer, the door to the cafeteria burst open and three teachers burst in demanding to know why they weren't in class yet. Only then did the entire room of star athletes realize that they are in fact late for class.

As everyone filed out, Akira told the bond banged boy, "I have a game tomorrow so I will miss school. My father informed me that you would be joining his study session tomorrow. We shall discuss the game there."

The rest of the day Hikaru was lost in thought, relishing the stimulating game he just played. It wasn't until the teacher called upon him did he snap to attention in class.

When afternoon came, Hikaru threw the go game to the back of his head as he bounced to his first soccer practise in two weeks. His team-mates gave him a hero's welcome. Hikaru could tell that a few of them were dying to ask about his most recent bout of fame from what they thought of as a board game, but none did. Whatever questions his team-mates had died when practise started. Oh how he missed soccer. How he missed the rush of running in the field with sweat and grass-stained jerseys. Hikaru rushed along his team-mates adrenaline rushing in his veins falling back to his old routine. All was good.

A day later... after dinner in front of the Toya house

Staring at the gate of the grand tradition home of the Toya household, Hikaru began to have doubts on whether it was a good idea to show up at all. True to his words, Akira did not show up to class that morning, the teacher said that he had a, what was it? Kisei? 2nd preliminary to attend. Yesterday night Hikaru began to have doubts on showing up to the study session despite the amazing game he played earlier that day. Although both the elder and the

younger Toya seem to think that his go is something to be recognized, he just wasn't sure that the other pros would think the same.

However, he made a promise to Akira, and no matter how he is insecure of his abilities, a promise is a promise.

Taking a deep breath, he pushed that doorbell pushing back the ominous feeling that he is walking towards his execution. "Who is it?" A female voice rang out.

"Uhh..." Surprised, Hikaru quickly regained his composure and replied, "Err, Hi, I'm Hikaru Shindo... Toya-sensei invited me to his study session...." Hikaru inwardly groaned at his pathetic introduction.

"Ah..." the female voice didn't seem to have the same opinion, "Koyo mentioned that you'd be coming. Akira had been looking forward to you being his since yesterday." The door opened and a petite woman stepped out, "Come in Shindo-kun, I'm Akira's mother."

Not quite sure of how to respond, Hikaru hastily stepped inside that room.

Before Hikaru could put his shoes away properly, Akira had appeared and proceeded to drag him to the study room. Stepping into the room, (really it was more like being shoved into the room by the usually polite go prodigy), Hikaru found himself to be the unwilling center of attention of the entire room other than Koyo Toya, who seem to find his usually composed son's impatient quite amusing.

The dignified man forever in a montsuki introduced him to everyone. Ashiwara seemed like a nice enough player but the blonde man, Ogata, gave Hikaru a bad feeling.

"Shindo-kun," the respective once 5-title holder started, "I've been told that you played a game of speed go against Akira yesterday."

"Yes... err... Toya-sensei," Hikaru stuttered a little intimidated by the atmosphere of the room, "I lost though," he continued, "by 0.5 moku."

That sent the room in to quite whispers. Hikaru thought that he even heard Ashiwara utter a soft, "Wow!"

"Akira also tells me that you have yet to discuss the game and had arranged to do so today, is that right?" The elder Toya asked.

"Yes father," Akira answered before Hikaru could even form his thoughts, "I was hoping that you'd give us some pointers."

"Of course," The impassive player nodded, "you may recreate that game on the goban where we were discussing the game between Kurata and Morishita," he nodded at the said goban, "I'm sure many of us wishes to see that game too."

As soon as his words ended, Akira got up to the said goban and started to clear it. Hikaru hurried to join him.

While the two of them replayed their little game, they unknowingly started the "discussion", which to the amusement of all the adults gathered sounded quite like an argument.

"What was that move at 8-12," Akira hissed, "9-12 is obviously more influential."

"Oh yeah?" Hikaru retorted, "Playing 9-12 would have given you the perfect chance to attack the upper right corner. What about you move at 4-2? That was poorly thought out; playing 4-3 would have gained much more influence."

"Well," Akira snapped, "I think it's an excellent move. And 9-12 would have put you in a better position to secure the middle of the board."

"Really!" Hikaru exclaimed angrily slowly raising the volume of his voice, "Well, had you played 4-3, I wouldn't be able to play 6-4, that

would have given you two more mokus."

"This would have given you the chance to attack that cluster at 3-3!" Akira almost yelled back. "4-2 effectively stopped you from attempting to cut at 3-3 it is an excellent move."

"No, it is not!" Hikaru screamed at Akira, banging his fist on the floor.

"It is too!" Akira retorted gripping the goke so hard that his knuckles turned white.

"It is not!"

"Is too!"

"Is not!"

"Is too!"

"Is not!"

"Is t-" Akira's angry come back was interrupted by a loud laughter from Ashiwara. Both Hikaru and Akira suddenly became aware of their audience and blushed deep crimson. Akira was horrified that he had acted so childish in front of so many of his senpais.

"How about playing at 3-2 instead?" Ashiwara suggested eyes dancing with amusement. "It could accomplish both." He pointed to the board.

"That's walking right into my/his trap!" both Akira and Hikaru snapped at the same time. They looked, no, glared at each other before turning their heads in opposite direction.

"They are right Ashiwara," the impassive voice of the former Meijin cut in. "However consider that this is a game of seed go that's played in underneath an hour, it is quite impressive. The Meijin continued the discussion, pointing out several places that could have turned the tide for either of them effectively silencing both fuming teenagers.

Ogata stared at the board. His sensei had already shown him the game he played against the soccer star. While Ogata was quite shocked at the display of insight that the blonde-banged player showed, Shindo's somewhat sloppy moves at the beginning and inconsistencies during the entire game made him think that the whole incident with Shindo was quite overblown. He had marked the move at 8-12 as a mere fluke.

However, this game was different. Sure, the readings were still a little sloppy looking at it from a high-dan's point of view, both players showed a depth of reading that could rival most high-dan. He literally watched Akira's growth, so the level that Akira showed was no surprise to him. But Shindo was different. While Ogata would never admit it, he had studied the interview. For a player who only started playing four and a half years ago and just started playing again after a one and a half year pause to be able to stand head to head against Akira, who was raised to play go seemed quite implausible.

Also, both of the games Shindo played reminded him of Sai. 'Especially that move at 6-7,' Ogata mused, 'that was positively Sai-ish. I must admit that Akira's decision to temporarily abandon that cluster was quite an interesting but also intelligent move. It was a correct decision that many high-dans would probably fail to make. But Shindo's move at 6-7 though was quite different.' While Shindo's skill was nowhere near Sai's level, there is an uncanny resemblance between their go. Shindo was almost like a watered down, more unconventional version of Sai. He smirked. 'Shindo,' he smirked could be the break through to Sai's identity.

'However, right now,' Ogata mused, 'Sai could wait. It's much more fun to make Shindo and Akira-kun squirm for being caught in such a childish fight.'

All in all, after the "little" fight, nothing major happened during the study session. Hikaru breathed a sigh of relief when he realized that no one seemed to look down upon him just because he wasn't a pro.

With a promise to come back, Hikaru left the Toya household.

To be continued...

(1) I know about most people's feelings for OC. No, she most likely will not play a major role in things. She will have a very minor role and we will not see much of her outside of Hikaru's class or school.

(2) He might be a little more important than Houtaru, but he probably has no important role in the story either. I'm just trying to create a more realistic environment.

(3) Those four are of no significant importance other than to serve as Hikaru's school friends.

So yeah... I'm not dead. Slowly peak above the desk and quickly ducks down to avoid flying objects.

As for why I took so long to update.... Well, let's just say that not only did I contract the plot bunny but normal life also caught up. Right now I'm so busy with university applications, scholarship stuff and AP courses that I have virtually no time to write anything. The good news though, is that I have managed to successfully defeat the plot bunny.

So... yeah sorry for the long absence and hopefully this extra long chapter somewhat makes up for it. I spent over five months mulling over the study session scene. I'm still not happy with it at all. But I figured that after spending so long mulling over it, just deleting it is just pathetic. Anyhow... I'm expecting flames for that awful Ogata blurb... it's beyond horrible. I can't seem to grasp him and I really couldn't bring myself to make you people wait another five months while I mull over him.

Anyhow, this is probably going to be the only update for quite a while. I'm just so busy! (I really don't know what possessed me to sign up for the AP exam... sigh....)

Since I feel terrible for not updating in so long I'm going to tell you that in the next chapter, the Japanese national junior soccer team (which Hikaru is a member of too) is going to play a game with the Korean team.... Since Hikaru will be going to Korea... (cough Ko Yangha cough...).

Well, hope you are happy with what you've got and please review. (I seem to be getting an awful lot of inspiration from them lately.) Thank you to everyone who reviewed for the past three chapters and I'm really sorry for never really getting around to replying them. (While I do feel kind of guilty, I'm assuming that you guys rather have a new chapter sooner.)

Please feel free to give me any suggestion!

Shiho signing off!